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UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

Offers by Member States of grants and scholarships for higher education, including vocational training, for Palestine refugees

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of its resolution 50/28 D of 6 December 1995.

2. The report includes the substance of responses from Member States and United Nations agencies to the appeal contained in that resolution, together with reference to further action taken by Member States and United Nations agencies in response to the appeal contained in General Assembly resolutions 32/90 F of 13 December 1977, 33/112 C of 18 December 1978, 34/52 C of 23 November 1979, 35/13 B of 3 November 1980, 36/146 H of 16 December 1981, 37/120 D of 16 December 1982, 38/83 D of 15 December 1983, 39/99 D of 14 December 1984, 40/165 D of 16 December 1985, 41/69 D of 3 December 1986, 42/69 D of 2 December 1987, 43/57 D of 6 December 1988, 44/47 D of 8 December 1989, 45/73 D of 11 December 1990, 46/46 D of 9 December 1991, 47/69 D of 14 December 1992, 48/40 D of 10 December 1993 and 49/35 D of 9 December 1994. In those resolutions the Assembly appealed to all States, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to augment the special allocations for grants and scholarships to Palestine refugees; invited the relevant specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system to continue, within their respective spheres of competence, to extend assistance for higher education to Palestine refugee students; and requested the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

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(UNRWA) to act as the recipient and trustee for such special allocations for grants and scholarships and to award them to qualified refugee candidates.

3. In 1995/96, the Government of Japan awarded 10 fellowships through UNRWA, of which 3 were to Palestine refugees employed by UNRWA as vocational training staff at the eight vocational training centres in its area of operations, 1 was a fellowship in Vocational Training Administration and the remaining 6 were fellowships in community health awarded to Palestine refugees employed by UNRWA as health staff. Applications of nominees for these fellowships for training in Japan were processed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency. A review of the programme shows that since its inception in 1985, and until 1996, a total of 134 fellowships have been offered by the Government of Japan, of which 124 have been processed. In 1989, the Government of Japan contributed $1 million, to be spent over a five-year period, towards the UNRWA university scholarship programme for secondary school graduates. The recipients are Palestine refugee students from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. One hundred and seven scholars graduated from this programme between 1993 and 1995 in a wide spectrum of specializations, while 41 students were still pursuing their university studies in the 1995/96 academic year. Arrangements were under way to use the interest accruing on this contribution to grant additional scholarships to some 8 to 10 Palestine refugee students. Between 1992 and 1994 the Government of Japan contributed an additional US$ 400,000 annually, and $500,000 in 1995, each such contribution to be spent over a five-year period, towards the UNRWA university scholarships programme for secondary school graduates from the UNRWA area of operations; the recipients are Palestine refugee students. A total of 302 recipients participated in the programme in 1995/96. These awards, while not specifically in response to the General Assembly resolutions, are in keeping with their spirit.

4. The Government of Switzerland contributed $1,207,171 between 1989 and 1994 to the UNRWA university scholarships programme for Palestine refugee students and contributed an additional $256,410 to the programme in 1995. Sixty-two scholars graduated between 1993 and 1995, while 221 students from the UNRWA area of operations were still pursuing their university studies in the 1995/96 academic year.

5. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as part of its long-standing agreement with UNRWA, granted 175 fellowships to Palestine refugee education staff of UNRWA in the period from 1981 to 1994. The Director-General addressed a circular letter on 25 February 1994 to member States, international organizations and Arab and Islamic funding sources appealing for voluntary contributions to a special fund for fellowships for Palestinian students and requesting them to consider providing sponsored fellowships for Palestinians. The circular letter was in accordance with decision 5.3.1 adopted by the UNESCO Executive Board at its one hundred and forty-second session. During the 1993/94 academic year, UNESCO awarded 28 scholarships to Palestinian students under the regional project entitled "Scholarship fund for higher education for students of occupied Arab territories", 17 scholarships from its regular programme and budget, and three scholarships under its Participation Programme, totalling $213,500. Under the inter-university cooperation programme Palestinian European Academic Cooperation in Education (PEACE) funded by UNESCO and the European Union and signed in September 1992, two scholarships were awarded and seven short-term study visits

to Palestinian university professors were awarded in the amount of $37,000. UNESCO has offered five new awards to Palestinian students since October 1995. In addition, the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to UNESCO submitted five candidatures for fellowships, for which the Education Sector in UNESCO provided $16,000. Of these fellowships three awards were made while the other two were pending confirmation of registration from the host institution. Another six fellowships were offered by different countries through UNESCO, of which two were from the Government of the Philippines lasting two years and to be implemented during 1996-1998, one from the Russian Federation in the field of radio and electronics under the sponsorship of the International Cooperation of Graduates of Soviet Educational Institutions (INCORVUZ) and expected to start in September/December 1996, and three from Burkina Faso in the fields of law, medicine and economics. Another 32 applications of Palestinian students were submitted by the Palestinian Authority to UNESCO and were still under consideration by UNESCO.

6. Since 1994 all fellowship applications to the World Health Organization (WHO) have been nominated by the Palestinian Authority. In 1995 WHO received 43 applications from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for fellowships scheduled to begin in late 1995. All these applications were processed and 43 fellowships ranging between two weeks to 12 months duration were completed in 1995/96 in various specializations and in different Arab, Asian and European countries.

7. The scholarships reported in 1995 (see A/50/450) which were offered to UNRWA by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) to train Agency staff members during the years 1994/95 were not processed. Three applications submitted to WIPO in 1994 were being considered for courses to be conducted during 1995/96. Another two applications were sent to WIPO in 1995 to be considered for courses to be conducted in 1996/97.

8. The United World Colleges continued their cooperation with UNRWA by offering scholarships to Palestine refugee students who complete the tenth grade, to study for two years leading to the international baccalaureate. In 1996, four scholarships were offered by the United World College of the Adriatic in Italy, Pearson College in Canada, Armand Hammer in the United States of America and the Li Po Chun in Hong Kong. They were scheduled to commence in September 1996.

9. The Technical Assistance Programme of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) for the training of Palestinians was defined after a mission to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in March 1995 by the section of UPU for the Arab countries. Within the framework of UPU technical assistance to the Arab countries for 1995, the Palestinian post office was to be provided with two scholarships, one in the field of marketing and the other in the field of postal services.